

Un-Anticipated - Part I of III
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As she stepped into the bus, she could hear the ‘clink’ of the coins dropping in the ticket box. The slush on her shoes fell off with each step to the middle of the bus. As she slid into her seat next to an ‘older’ woman, she couldn’t help notice that the woman’s head was bobbing from side to side and up and down. It was similar to that of a bobble-head dog that one might find on the back window of a car. She tried not to stare. As she gazed out the window, the driver pulled away and everyone was lurched backward and then forward by the momentum of the bus. There was something soothing about the rhythm of the woman’s head. Bouncing and shaking to and fro, the woman reminded her of her grandmother. She vowed to look into symptoms of Parkinson’s disease.

Other people were just settling into their seats, as well. The ‘ding’ of the bell signaled exiting passengers that the next stop was soon approaching. Almost as if in a trance, they rose out of their seats, one by one, anticipating the next stop. Some grasping poles, still others standing freely as if in complete and utter trust of the driver. As the bus screeched to a grinding halt, everyone lurched forward and back again, in a rhythmic wave, as if they were one wave upon the ocean moving as one.

The doors waved open, people jumped off, and others climbed up, as if climbing a mountain. Scurrying to their seats, anticipating the usual ride home, they found their places. It was not meant to be a usual ride home. For some it was the last conscious decision they made; to get on the bus. For the rest, not something they would soon forget.

By this time, she felt comfortable with her position on the bus. Some things about the ride seemed routine, like the smell of the driver’s hazelnut coffee and the pastry he had mounted on the dash for his 5 minute break at the usual intersection in the middle of his route. But that pastry would never be eaten, nor the coffee drunk entirely. Something was about to occur which would change the lives of every person on that bus, some for the better, but most for the worse.

Barreling down the highway, the driver could see what appeared to be a stretch limo. Indeed, it was a stretch-limo, even more stretched than usual. It was the length of five average-sized cars. The limo began making a turn, which to some might be considered a ‘Michigan- Left.’

A Michigan-Left is one of those turns where there is a median, or grassy area between traffic, going in opposite directions, usually separating two to four lanes of traffic going in either direction. The driver turns to go in the opposite direction crossing the median in a curved, paved half-circle.

In this case, there were three lanes going in either direction. The driver, noticing the slowness of the limo's turn, decreased speed as it approached the turning vehicle rapidly. Almost without warning, the limo stopped completely, stretching itself across three lanes of traffic. Each lane had vehicles advancing at slightly different speeds. The bus going at a medium speed compared to the other racers.

The first to make contact with the limo was the black Corvette, going ten miles over the speed limit. It was driving in the center lane, and sliding on the watery slush, it seemed to slice the limo in half like a sandwich. The limo was now in the shape of 'V,' with the Corvette nestled snugly within its crest. The driver of the sportscar immediately flattened within his own makeshift coffin.

Next to make contact was the bus. Knocking the front of the limo, like a bowling ball knocking over its coveted pin, it bent the limo into a 'Z' as the long machines connected. The driver of the limo, being tossed around like a rag doll, bounced out of his driver's door and onto the pavement, sliding himself across the wet, slushy ice like a hockey puck. Peering out the window, she noticed the wedding guests outside the reception hall. They watched in amazement as their reason for the celebration disintegrated before their eyes.

The people on the bus flew in different directions as the two long vehicles touched noses. The older woman's head bobbed no more as she smashed against the rubber-grooved floor of the bus. The coffee splashed about like brown raindrops dripping off the ceiling. She reached out to grab a pole as she flew through the bus like a fairy, floating in the air. Her grip, not strong enough to resist the force that the bus created as it braked, slid off the pole and continued flying with the rest of her body.

Everyone, who remained conscious, watched the limo, with baited breath, anticipating life to emerge from it. The suspense was too much to take. As guests ran toward the limo, the sound of sirens could be heard from somewhere in the distance. People, scattered about like pawns on a chess board, had cell phones glued to their ears. Each hoping they might be the one to bring hope to this tragic scene. Emergency vehicles arriving, slid off of medians and onto side streets surrounding the site.

The flying body within the bus came to halt as it landed up against a supply of life-vests in the ceiling of the bus. The bus, now resting on the grassy shoulder of the road near the local oil-change business. People, perhaps residents, came to peer inside the bus to see if any survivors existed. Peering up from the life-vests she noticed a bride, drenched in blood, running and screaming frantically. The groom lay decapitated within the sawed open limo.

"If only I had more time to stop..." the bus driver mumbled, as the ambulance attendant buckled him in.

“There’s your story,” the officer beckoned back to the rookie reporter of ‘The Mirror’, a new paper that was trying to make itself known among the many publications in the tri-city area.

Sheila gazed up at him from the life-vests, as his miniature cassette recorder clicked into the ‘on’ position.

“Care to make a statement, young lady?” he queried, holding it close to her face.

“Where am I?” she babbled under her breath. “What just happened?” She looked at him, as if he had all the answers.

“Apparently, you’ve just been in a crash of some kind. I came to get a story, I mean, see if you were okay.” He carried on, reaching out his hand to help her out. The window of the bus now posing as a make-shift door.

“Thank you.” She reached out, feeling oddly like a princess stepping out of a carriage.

“Anyone else alive in there?” he asked her, as if she were the captain of the vessel.

“How would I know?” She began to get irritated by his quizzical and uninformed nature.

There was something about him that seemed friendly. She’d have to look into that later, for now she could feel a warm liquid oozing from her side. She looked down and saw that her peach-colored blouse was now decorated with a maroon-shaded blood stain.

“Put your arm around my neck,” he suggested. “I’ll carry you to the ambulance. This place is like a war zone.”

She felt better, now, about letting him into her social space. This stranger from out of no where probably just saved her life. As they hobbled over to the flashing lights of the emergency vehicles scattered about, they developed a rhythm with their steps, as if in a three-legged race at the county fair.

“I’m Jake,” he blurted out. “Everything’s going to be alright.” He explained this as if he thought it wouldn’t. She hoped he was right. It was not the right time to die, not for her anyway. They wended their way through the strewn bodies that decorated the snowy grass at the side of the road.

The warm bodies melting the snow around them like chalk outlines on a

detective drama.

“This one’s a keeper!” he shouted to the firefighter who had ran over to assist. How dare he speak about her as if she were a puppy at a pet shop being selected for adoption. As she thought this, the world around her became dim, and then black.

Waking up in the recovery room, the lights burned her eyes as she came to. “You’ll be okay,” he chanted. “Nothing a couple of stitches couldn’t fix,” trying to sound like a doctor, he braced himself, ready for the questions that would come like bullets being shot at him.

“What do you mean stitches?!” she demanded looking fiercely at him, waiting for an explanation.

“You’ve been in a little accident, don’t worry,” he soothed. “I’m Jake, remember?”

“I don’t care who you are!” she spat out the remark. Then calming herself slightly, she questioned him. “Why do I have stitches, and how many do I have?”

“Twenty-seven, to be exact,” he declared, as if announcing the number of pies eaten at the same county fair. “You had to have your appendix removed after they got the internal bleeding under control.”

“They?” she questioned him. With each step of the conversation, the roles reversed as she became the reporter, questioning him. Her memory was slowly surfacing with each word that he spoke to her.

Something was familiar about his voice, but she couldn’t put her finger on it.

“You know, the doctors...” he prompted, “the ones that just saved your life.”

She didn’t want to make it easy for him. She needed time to figure out where she knew him from.

“The doctors saved my life from...? She paused to let him fill in the blanks.

“From the accident, they saved your life from the accident you were in three days ago!” His voice started to become irritating again as he showed frustration with her questions.

Three days ago? How could time have slipped away from her that easily? She had places to go, things to do. Was anyone worrying about her?

“They wanna know who you are. You didn’t have any I.D. on you, and

they gotta contact someone.” He mentioned this as if it were a trivial fact in a newspaper article.

“I’m not ready to share that information with you. I don’t even know who you are.” She said this out loud, while thinking, ‘I could be anyone I want to be. If no one knows me, I could make up an identity and start over. I have to find out what they do know, before I create a new me.’ She decided to be silent as long as possible.

“Well, what did you discover, Mr. Porter?” A man looking like a doctor strolled in, anticipating answers to the daily riddle of the week.

“I can’t say I can answer that with any hard facts.” He was beginning to sound like a reporter again.

To be continued...